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DECEMBER, 1949

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EDITORIAL

LET the Government return a percentage of the box-office tax to the producer—the man who, after all, takes the real risk in film making. I say that this can and should be done.

The Arts Council of Great Britain has exempted the American play, "A Streetcar Named Desire," from entertainment tax. This is a "cultural" subject and, as such is entitled not to pay tax.

But it seems to me very unfair that "Hamlet"—a film produced by the same man—should not be considered "cultural" enough for exemption.

My next picture, *O Mistress Mine*, by Terence Rattigan, may also be rated a "cultural" subject. For this reason, I shall apply to the Arts Council for tax exemption—the first film producer to do so.

The Arts Council's reply should make interesting reading.

And if I am told that exemption is granted only to non-profit-making concerns, I will then be able to say that all British film companies have the necessary qualifications.—ANATOLE DE GRUNWALD, "F.M.R." guest editorial writer.

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COVER STILL: Rumanian actress Nadia Gray, now starring in the Mayflower production, *The Spider and the Fly*.

Edited by Robert Hirst

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"HOME OF THE BRAVE" PRODUCER ATTACKS HOLLYWOOD

STANLEY KRAMER, 35-year-old producer of *Champion* and that very adult film about anti-Negro prejudice, *Home of the Brave*, stated, in a speech at New York University's Department of Motion Pictures, that the independent producer is now in a position to "break" the Hollywood "factory" system and win back the mature audiences who have forsaken film-going.

"No longer," said Mr. Kramer, "is a lush musical, or a favourite

starring combination, or full-page advertisements enough to bring in the crowds. Cinema-goers have now begun to shop. To-day they carefully weigh values. They are not satisfied with repeats of last year's models.

"If the independent producer is brave enough to back his own judgment and avoid Hollywood's usual pitfalls, he has the greatest opportunity in the history of motion pictures to usurp the more important playing time and come out with a substantial profit."



"Moss" (James Edwards) and psychiatrist Jeff Corey in "Home of the Brave," a United Artists' release.

THE REMEDY

by

Three British Film Makers

Director Thorold Dickinson:

Put more brains and brawn and less cash into our film making. Be bold, individual, unconventional. Select stories with greater care, and pay more attention to good casting.

There is too much *talk* in British films. Where dialogue is necessary it should be concise, snappy. That is half the trouble with our films in the United States market.

Americans prefer English action to English accent. Having invented the American language, the only hope of getting a bigger, more profitable showing for our films is to cut dialogue by 40 per cent.

As the poor relations, we have to accept American films and the American accent. They do not have to accept ours.

Producer Anatole de Grunwald:

Reduce the crippling entertainments tax; this is driving our producers out of business.

Something, too, will have to be done about the wickedly exorbitant salaries paid to players who call themselves "stars" but who are, in fact, nothing of the kind.

A genuine star—a big name that attracts the customers into the cinemas—is worth every

penny he, or she, is paid; and some receive enormous sums.

But these much-boasted mediocrities, whose names mean nothing at the box-office, are a menace.

Given a first-rate story, a producer can economise by engaging a cast of highly talented yet comparatively unknown players, as Ealing have done with *The Blue Lamp*, and the Boulting Brothers are doing with *Seven Days to Noon*.

Concentrate on good stories and good casting. In these conditions, unknown players will be no hindrance to success.

George Minter

(Managing Director, Renown Pictures):

First we must get rid of the "dead-wood" and give the young men with fresh minds and ideas a chance.

Concentrate on subjects of international appeal. I say "international" because we *must* sell our films abroad.

The entertainments tax makes revenue from the home market pitifully small. So either we export or we say good-bye to British production.

Stop making films that are parochial in spirit and outlook. Find *new* stars (Richard Todd is a shining example) and build them up. And develop new producers and directors.

Let The Illusion Live

By Andre Belhomme

Why take the public behind the screens? No wonder cinema-goers now look for the back-projection!

ROMANCE, in the widest sense of the word, is one of the greatest assets of the cinema. It brings in the customer; call it entertainment, escapism, or what you will, millions pay weekly to be "taken out of themselves," to satisfy this natural romantic craving for laughter, for adventure, and for a sob at some cinematic calamity.

The film is illusion to which there is conscious acquiescence; no matter whether the story touches reality in the patron's life, or provides a happy allure-ment into vistas beyond a present or probable experience.

While allowing that some films, because of their subject and treatment, may have a bad influence, I am concerned here with the majority, which provide that necessary stimulation to our jaded lives.

Explaining Faked Shots

Thus, obviously, the greater the illusion, the greater and more potent the effect. To those who argue that some films—in particular, a selected few from the Continent—tell the story in a simple, earthy manner (settings, lighting and "naturalistic" acting), I say that the sum total is still a *film*, a screen *illusion*.

Now let us take the practice, growing in intensity, by which film companies release information to the Press as to "how it is done." This drip-drip-drip revelation of professional secrets must affect the atmosphere essential to the film.

No doubt you will remember "Great Expectations." I greatly liked this film. But, to this day, I cannot understand why certain executives released photographs and the story, nor their sanctioning of the display of a model, at an exhibition, which explained how the picture's dramatic paddle-boat sequence was faked. This, before the film's release!

Should Maestro Tell?

And, currently, as I write, certain photographs displayed outside a Leicester Square theatre, showing Alfred Hitchcock's *Under Capricorn*, amaze and distress me.

In general, the front-of-house publicity here is excellent: there are fine stills from the film; a range of photographs featuring Ingrid Bergman in changing mood, with consecutive story captions underneath.

But there are also ill-lit, ill-posed "informal" pictures depicting "Hitch," the stars, the cameraman and the dress designer.

Thus, the patron is brought back to earth with a jolt.

Alfred Hitchcock has a right to be proud of his many achievements; but I am not quite happy about an illustrated article, signed by himself, which appeared in a weekly magazine.

We learn how he sketched the grouping of scenes in advance so that camera and lighting crews would have an idea of the set-up required. Doubtless magnificent for the studio technicians. But was it really necessary, "Hitch"? *Must* the maestro tell?

Of course, I sympathise with the film producer who needs as much publicity as possible for his creations. I also appreciate the Press editors' points of view; they must be tired of the unimaginative "dope" sent to them by film companies wanting free editorial "mentions."

Consequently, the Press is insisting more and more on material that has either a "core" of news value or is of genuine interest.

Her Third Husband!

And there lies the difficulty. The film publicists' brains have been wracked. With the result . . . ah, yes—why not tell the public how such and such an effect is achieved. Reveal technical data. Tell everybody how wonderful it all is!

How stupid. Creating an illusion on the one hand, and helping to destroy it on the other. Quite extraordinary, for example, is the number of people who now look for that good, old back-projection!

Further, I object to the tendency to reveal the artistes' private lives. I am not suggesting that it is wrong to humanise the stars; but let them have their aura of romantic appeal as well.

Is it not a disillusionment to learn that one of the more appealing actresses, who symbolises youth and beauty and a high degree of aesthetic femininity, has been twice divorced and will shortly be in receipt of a baby from her third amorous husband?

Best Publicity—Good Films

To make the point still clearer—have you ever noticed your reaction at the performance of an artiste known to you personally? However good, you are not entirely convinced; you find it difficult to dissociate the actor from the person you yourself know off-screen.

Therefore, if the films are to be debunked, my dear Producer, leave it to the audience or to your beloved critics—don't give any encouragement.

Better still—make finer films. And let the results speak for themselves.

NEXT MONTH



**BERNARD
SHAW**

answers the question—

**"Stories for Stars,
or
Stars for Stories?"**

THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

EDINBURGH

AS a mere Sassenach whose knowledge of Scotland was largely founded on an appreciation of *Whisky Galore!*, I had a preconceived idea of the Scottish Sabbath. It seems, however, that Edinburgh occasionally permits every Highlander to have his fling and Documentary Film and Festival Sundays have brought Art to Midlothian.

There were also, during the three-week Festival, daily and specialist showings of some 200 films from 25 different countries, providing a cross-section of life as complete as could be desired by any student of humanity.

However, Festivals are largely social occasions. This was no exception, but the choice of Documentary lent earnestness to the proceedings.

From the opening speech, by Sir Stephen Tallents, to the Festival's reluctant close, it never failed to provide a talking point or that flash of colour induced by a Personality—Robert Flaherty of America, Theodore Christiansen of Denmark, John Heyer of Australia, and many others.

But to the discriminating film-goer it was not merely a technician's reunion; it was also an opportunity to study and compare film-production methods of different countries and temperaments, and, more especially, to assess the development of the cinema in those parts of the world where it is comparatively new.

From HENRY L. JAMES

Yugoslavia and Argentine

Yugoslavia's is perhaps the youngest film industry among the nations exhibiting this year. It all began in 1942, when a group of partisans found a German news-reel camera after a battle. Yugoslavia is now producing feature films and though the most recent—*Sofka*—is a period piece of no great originality, it is ambitious.

Argentine, too, is young cinematically; but development was accelerated during the war when equipment from America was more readily available than films.

I saw *Se Major Alumno*, a biographical study of an early educationalist president, so studied with domestic politics as to be almost unintelligible; but it is sufficiently coherent to show excellent acting of the Spanish school against a novelettish background.

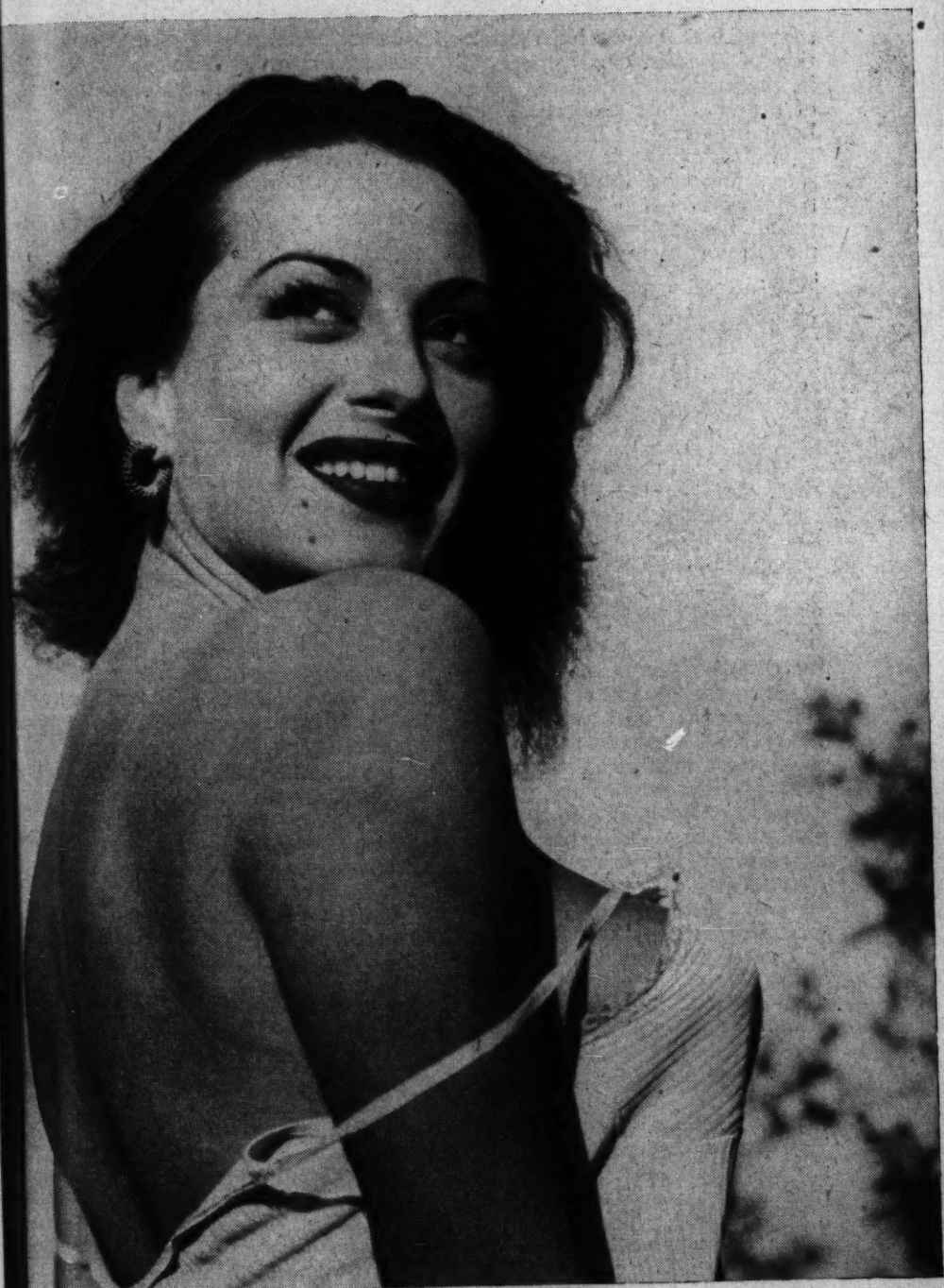
But in a little travelogue called *El Tigre* I found the subtlest photography of the Festival.

Here are delicately contrasting shots and exquisite montage in a simple study of a Norfolk-like landscape. Just that and no more—a holiday booklet—but beautifully done.

Australasia

By contrast, the photography from New Zealand and Australia was shoddy and the films coarse-grained.

Namatjira the Painter is a



Lux Star Yvonne Sansom.

conventional study of the evolution of an aboriginal artist told in the slightly patronising tones of the evangelist speaking of his latest convert.

Photographed in colour, it shows the vivid strata of mountain formations in Central Australia in a way which stimulates the geologist rather than the artist.

However, in *The Valley is Ours*, Australia achieves maturity. This is the story of a river valley and its people: the great Murray river colony. It is told fluently in graphic language with exciting photography.

There's something about a river that appeals to the artist and the photographer. Its ceaseless flow is as restless as his imagination. Certainly John Heyer, who directed and introduced the film at Edinburgh, found it so.

Germany

Much has already been written and more has been said about *Berliner Ballade*, hailed as the most important film to come from post-war Germany. Its significance is probably deeper than its muddled theme would suggest, but the critical viewpoint has been distorted by extravagant advance eulogies of the leading actor—Gert Fröbe.

Teutonic humour certainly reveals a more cynical approach than hitherto, but the setting of fantasy against the realistic background of Berlin's ruined buildings destroys the force of the satire.

This German Everyman—an impassioned version of little men the world over—is ironic rather than satirical; and the real significance of the film lies in the fact that, however difficult the physical, social or economic con-

ditions, the creative artist will always overcome them.

For this film was made during the Berlin blockade, under every conceivable handicap, from lack of equipment to lack of even ordinary amenities.

France

The most easily palatable offering was Jacques Tati's *Jour de Fête*, a film which qualifies for a Documentary Festival by definition only.

It is purest fiction—the simple story of a leisurely French village postman inspired, by a visiting cinema show in a fair, to emulate the speedy methods of the mechanised American postal service—but, because it was shot entirely on location in the village of St. Severe-sur-Indre, using the villagers as actors, it just gets by.

On this basis, *Tawny Pipit* is also a Documentary.

But the delirious good humour of *Jour de Fête* makes any quibble merely churlish. Its comedy is superb and the use of mime is emphasised by the frequent long-shot and the fading of the soundtrack. It was written, directed and acted by Jacques Tati who creates in Francois, the postman, a gloriously lugubrious clown.

Britain

I was disappointed in *Tinker*—our most recent contribution to this field. Herbert Marshall—who, with his wife Fredra Brilliant, wrote and directed it—himself introduced the film and explained that he sought to prove, after seeing such films as *Paisa*, that we too could find natural actors among completely untrained people, especially children.

Tinker proves quite the opposite. The dreadfully stilted scenes of working-class family life are stained to the point of

embarrassment, and only in the sequences showing the naturally impressive miners' rally in Durham Cathedral could I detect real sincerity.

Good and Bad

For the rest, the Festival underlined a truism—how dull an interesting subject can be in the hands of the wrong director, and how fascinating the imaginative director can make the most unpromising material.

I place firmly in the first category the Canadian film, *Lascaux*, about the 50,000-year-old cave drawings recently discovered; and I also found tedious the pretentious monotony of the Russian *V. I. Lenin*, with its solid ninety-minute commentary and raucous music which effected half a dozen false climaxes.

Equally firmly, I commend the beauty of Alfred Ehrhardt's production of *Ad Dei Honorem* which brings to life, without commentary, the carved wooden images of the Bruggeman Altar, and tells dramatically the story of the Crucifixion.

I was impressed, too, by the forceful Italian film of the artist Bosch.

One clear fact emerged—the dance cannot be satisfactorily translated to the screen, despite the contradictory success of *The Red Shoes*. It is essentially a three-dimensional means of ex-

pression; six films attempting it achieved only mediocrity.

Outstanding Moments

There were other limelights. The grim realism unobtainable in a Hollywood studio—or, indeed, in any unoccupied country—in two films of the Resistance movement: *The Last Stage* (Poland) and *The Red Meadows* (Denmark). The glorious comedy in Richard Massingham's too-brief *Pedestrian Crossing*, showing how to cross the road. The most perfect single shot—the opening scene in *Yugoslavian National Dances*: a jagged white cloud on a blue-sky, and a Macedonian skyline with a similarly jagged white line of sheep on a green hillside. The fascination (and futility) of Norman McClaren's *Dots*: a brief Canadian film made by drawing with ordinary pen and ink on unexposed film. The great performance of Anna Magnani in Rossellini's *The Miracle*. And the simple interest of the Swedish *A Handful of Rice*.

A diverse and always interesting Festival, proving finally the power of the visual image in creating a universal language greater than any possible system of verbal shorthand: in showing, moreover, that in the cinema—as in all arts—there's always something new and tantalising around the corner.

HOLLYWOOD

AT a behind-closed-doors meeting at M.G.M. for executives, producers and department heads, called by Louis B. Mayer and Doré Schary, it was announced that, due to the economic effect of the devaluation of the British pound, production costs must be streamlined.

From PAT GOITLIEB

It was stressed that film standards must be maintained, but there should be no waste whatever in production. The weeding out of unnecessary people was also ordered by the studio chiefs.

Twelve members of the M.G.M. sales force have left for Rome, Paris and London to

exchange ideas with the international sales department.

For years the Hollywood Bowl has refused the use of its title for a movie; now its board of directors has passed a script written by Jack Preston and Gus Inglis. The Bowl will get 25 per cent. of whatever the writers are paid, and it will also receive a percentage of the profits from any picture made on the subject.

Three Celebrities Die

Within four days, death came to three Hollywood celebrities: Richard Dix, Frank Morgan and Sam Wood. Wood directed such hits as *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*; *For Whom the Bell Tolls*; and *Command Decision*. Morgan will be remembered for his many M.G.M. roles, and for the laughter he brought to this town. Dix is the long-time favourite remembered as the rugged hero of many Hollywood outdoor epics.

Production was at a low ebb during September with only 37 pictures being made, of which six were on location. However, a slight uptrend was noted in October with such pictures as M.G.M.'s *Miniver* sequel (made in England), R.K.O.'s *Carriage Entrance*, U.I.'s *Deported*.

Hollywood enjoyed the television debut of the Ed. Wynn Show at Columbia Broadcasting System. Klieg lights and movie stars made it a premiere in the old style. Most television shows now originate in New York. Hollywood used Wynn to seek television prominence.

Losing Millions

Darryl Zanuck believes the policy of foreign picture making will be continued despite currency devaluation. He claims that his main consideration in mak-

ing pictures abroad is the fact that the particular story could not be made in Hollywood.

However, the feeling here is that the "B" product will be shut out of Europe as a result of devaluation; with the income down and the costs up, it will not be profitable to ship these pictures abroad.

It is estimated that American companies who have frozen coin throughout the world will lose on paper about \$24,000,000. These companies are suffering an immediate loss, but it may be counterbalanced, or even outweighed, if devaluation eases the sterling area's dollar starvation.

Fred Astaire, who "retired" from the screen two years ago, has completed two pictures and has two more ready for production. In his case, of course, the comeback was "by popular demand."

"The Reader's Digest"—Louis De Rochement, Inc., will make six hour-length features, culled from stories published by the Digest.

M.G.M. has found a story for Lena Horne. She will portray Josephine Baker in *The Josephine Baker Story*, to be made in Paris.

Marlon Brando, young Broadway actor, has arrived to make his motion-picture debut in Stanley Kramer's *The Men*.

Reviews of New Releases

Twentieth Century-Fox's *Oh, You Beautiful Doll* is a semi-fictional, musical biography of the life of Fred Fisher (American composer), produced by George Jessel. S. Z. Sakall, as Fisher, walks off with the acting honours. June Haver and Mark Stevens charm as the romantic leads.

Such nostalgic tunes as *Peg O'*



A new study of Silvana Mangano, to be seen in "Bitter Rice." (Lux Films.)

My Heart; Come, Josephine, in My Flying Machine; and Daddy, You've Been a Mother to Me, are the best things in this Technicolor musical.

Columbia's *Miss Grant Takes Richmond* is one of the year's crazy comedies. Lucille Ball, William Holden, and such old favourites as Jimmy Gleason and Frank McHugh act well. The climax, a satire on gangster films, is extremely good.

M.G.M.'s *Battleground*, two hours of heart-rending drama and robust, earthy humour, is the

story of the American G.I. in the Battle of the Bulge.

This series of fragments gives the day-by-day account of those desperate, foggy weeks when the infantry fought a lonely, waiting fight.

The dialogue is brittle and caustic, the situations are both movingly humorous and starkly tragic. It has an all-star male cast and Denise Darcel, the only female.

The camera work by Paul Vogel and the musical score, by Lennie Hayton, are especially good.

CANNES AND VENICE

From FRANCES MULLIN CLARK

FILM festivals galore punctuated the summer at the rate of about one a month. Journalists, critics, "Serious students of the cinema," publicists, distributors, and so on, wore out their suitcases and patience trekking, like a lost tribe, from one country to another.

By the time this motley team arrived in Venice and Cannes the whirligig was running down—tempers and films were wearing thin. But the grave lack of worth-while films was obscured by the piling up of tourist attractions, cocktail parties and receptions.

In all this dizzy round of merry-making, no one stopped to query the real value of film festivals. But the question uncomfortably pushes itself to the fore—were we being used as tourist guinea-pigs after all?

We undoubtedly did receive generous hospitality and courtesy from all sides. And set in glittering Riviera surroundings it is

hard not to succumb to the joys of "tourism."

The secondary purpose of a film festival is frankly commercial; foreign currency, along with some publicity for the leading holiday resorts. No one can grumble if festival authorities seek their returns this way.

But when this secondary purpose threatens to nullify the prime motive, which is the interchange of good films and a meeting of film-makers, reform is called for, otherwise festivals will swiftly lose their value.

Why These Countries?

Knokke in Belgium, and then Locarno in Switzerland, started off the merry-go-round this year. Now why should these two small countries wish to give festivals at all? Neither has a production industry worth mentioning. Yet a large slice of Europe's best films of the year were thrown away at these baby-brother festivals.

Films like Italy's *In The Name*

of the Law, *The Mill on the River Po* and *Bicycle Thieves* were eagerly awaited by the film enthusiasts throughout the world. But only a few were lucky enough to see them at Knokke and Locarno.

Then Communist Czechoslovakia decided to show decadent Westerners how well politics can rule the arts and staged an "iron curtain" festival at Marianske Lazne. Britain sent one of her better films, *Scott of the Antarctic*, leaving dregs such as *The Blue Lagoon* for far better customers at Venice.

As a complete contrast, the inimitable Cocteau organised a little-publicised and genuine festival at Biarritz. This remained faithful to its aim of promoting the art of the cinema by showing films considered to be too good for normal commercial success.

Along with the classics of the future were shown some of the past by masters such as Eisenstein, Gremillion, Blasetti, Visconti and Vigo. Britain did not contribute, but the States showed up well.

Italy Not At Venice!

The Venice Film Festival, doyen by virtue of having celebrated its tenth birthday, took place in late summer. But something strange happened here; Italy's own big production companies did not participate, thus leaving a sad gap.

Britain's *Private Angelo* was withdrawn for being insulting to the Italians. And both *The Blue Lagoon* and *The Elusive Pimpernel* provoked the wrong sort of mirth. *The Passionate Friends* aroused only a mild interest—Lean was considered to be slumbering on his laurels; but *Kind Hearts and Coronets* was quite

warmly welcomed, proof that national humour can be internationally understood.

However, Venice scored in certain points of organisation. For example, films were screened twice, on successive days; also, the reception committees took endless pains to ensure the well-being of each guest.

All the same, some bewilderment, and not a little ill-humour, prevailed over the allocation of party invitations. Sometimes they arrived too late, and sometimes not at all.

Certain petty despots representing unimportant film countries did their own cause much harm by neglecting the Press, to the point of insult, in favour of the so-called socialites, useless to the industry.

Not only Venice, but Cannes, too, deserves this criticism. Main complaint in Venice was the lack of sub-titling, especially on the films of remote language. This adds insult to injury if the film happens to be bad.

Publicity arrangements for Italy's own industry were meagre; and for Mexico, entirely lacking. Most useful were those of Britain and France.

Why No British Stars?

Challenging the supremacy of Venice, France's third Film Festival opened in Cannes, allowing no interim breathing space.

In France, arrangements for the Press, with the usual exception of Mexico, were far better. Britain, in particular, scored, thanks to the effort of Anthony Downing, representing the British Film Producers' Association. Downing did a magnificent job tirelessly; it was not his fault that few British personalities and no stars appeared.

But our own production did us proud. As well as carrying off top prize (for *The Third Man*), *Obsession*, *The Queen of Spades* and *Passport to Pimlico* were all very well received.

The U.S.A. contribution was not insignificant, and, as in Venice, many of Hollywood's prize exhibits, in the way of stars, disported themselves up and down the coast, which probably helped them to gain all the major acting prizes.

No British stars around, no British acting prizes—is there any connection?

Film festivals must be reduced in number and in size. Quality and not quantity needs stress.

FESTIVAL FANFARE

AN unbelievably thinner Anna Magnani, in tight black sweater and slacks, curled on a sofa in the lounge of the Excelsior Hotel, Lido, Venice, daily and held court. Friends from London were hailed with special delight and the voluble Anna was never tired of telling her audience of her success with British fans.



HER new film, *Vulcano*, is being hastily cut, so that it will be ready before the rival Rossellini-Bergman island film, *Stromboli*.



AMONG old friends at Cannes was Norma Shearer, ever gracious and youthful. In a wide-skirted, strapless evening gown of white, her light brown hair in a loose bob, she looked little changed. She was accompanied by her ski-instructor, now her second husband.

Norma was sitting with a moustachioed Edward G. Robinson at the Duke of Windsor's

Only then will they perform a really useful service to the cinema. The organisation in every case needs tightening up; and submitted films below a certain standard must be ruthlessly rejected.

To dispel ugly rumours, members of the jury should be chosen solely for their artistic perception; they should be untainted with religious, political, commercial or nationalistic bias (if such an ideal group of persons could ever be found!).

And finally, films should not be thrust, morning, noon and night, at the poor nerve-ridden Press. The human mind cannot stand such rough treatment.

table at the gala opening. Elsa Maxwell, still social queen of the South, had brought them all along to see the firework display. Even Pablo Picasso, representing "True Art," was present at this sumptuous party.



JOAN FONTAINE, in a vivid red satin gown, took a look in at the Lido the same night as Joseph Cotten and Douglas Fairbanks. Men stars always seem to look their screen selves, but women are either surprisingly better or else disappointingly ordinary in the flesh.

This reflection grew after watching Maria Montez on the terrace of the Excelsior for "cheese-cake pin-ups." Ready for her daily bathe, she had on enough chunky gold jewellery to sink her the moment she entered the water.



A NOTABLE feature at Cannes was the pathetic herds of unknown starlets, all looking exactly

alike, blonde and tanned. These little girls get "discovered" awarded a good part or two, and then seem to vanish. France hasn't such a contrived star system as Hollywood and Britain.



THERE'S no doubt about it, many of the famous screen lovelies famous for their curves, here looked merely thin to the point of undernourishment.

Silvana Mangano that genuinely shapely star, caused a sensation when she appeared for the first time on the screen in the much-heralded *Bitter Rice*.

The French Press hailed her as the sensation of the Festival. It was a pity that, due to family reasons, she was unable to attend personally.

Sole representative of British players at Cannes was Czech Paula Valenska, who speaks broken English. Looking really glamorous, Paula was hastily brought over from Monte Carlo, where she was on location with Anatole de Grunwald's *Three*

Men and a Girl, in order to appear at the opening gala.



LLILIAN GISH arrived at Cannes unexpectedly, in time for Elsa Maxwell's "super-plushy" socialite reception on the Casino terrace.

Her pale ginger dress exactly matched her hair. Lilian, on a car-tour of the Continent, had recently been in London and was planning to return. She's in love with our theatre, she said.

Sitting with her was that great film-maker, Flaherty, and Eric von Stroheim, as Prussian off-screen as he is on.



TO-DAY Italian women are unanimously recognised as the best-dressed in the world. And Italy's film stars, Carla del Poggio (seen in *Pursuit* at the Academy) and Gina Lollobrigida, a superbly beautiful girl, were by far the most exquisitely attired at the Lido.

Carla was present with her talented husband, Alberto Latuada, one of Italy's leading directors.

GERMANY

AFTER the paralysis of the first post-war months ended, and the ban on cinemas was lifted, the Germans found in the film the perfect escape from the misery of their everyday life.

For three years, however, they had to content themselves with a tiny repertoire of "safe" films shown over and over again; all films with any "Nazis" in the cast were ruthlessly banned; and no attempt whatever was made to revive good pre-Nazi films.

On the other hand, a few selected good English films were

From ANTHONY LODGE

shown. But, in the main, cinema-goers were content with anything, provided that they could sit in the warm.

Then came the currency reform of June, 1948; and the box office became a buyer's market overnight. The German cinema-goer began to turn his pfennig over three times before spending it.

At the same time, the young and growing German film industry, and the many foreign producers anxious to cash in on the stabilised D-mark, began to com-

pete for his custom. He began to get choosy.

Cinema-going in Germany today is a much more serious business than in Britain. Cinemas are mostly small and comfortless, with wooden seats. Performances are held at fixed times; there are no continuous shows.

All tickets are bookable, at prices from 9d. to 2/6d., and are bought at the box office or an agency, often days or weeks ahead. Thus queueing hardly exists. Double-feature programmes are unknown, and "B" pictures are not shown.

Love of Tragedy

The result of all this is to make the German film-fan a very critical, if somewhat biased, person. On the whole, his taste is as low as that of the mass-audience in any other country; the chaos of the war, and twelve years of Goebbels'-inspired censorship, have destroyed any standards he may once have had.

He demands, above all, escape, for which he probably has every justification, in view of his daily background of ruins and making ends meet with prices soaring.

Thus the typical German post-war film, with its gloomy obsession with ruins and tragedy, is not to his taste (such films are likely to find a much readier market outside Germany).

Social and political problems are avoided; a combination of guilt and self-deception seems to animate Germans in their avoidance of such topics as concentration-camps, anti-Semitism and the like.

At the same time, the Germans still have their traditional respect for "Kultur" and the equivalent contempt for "Kitsch." In practice this implies a dislike for any-

thing at all experimental or novel in art, and a love of heavy tragedy and mysticism.

Even now, foreign pictures are shown to a much greater extent than in England, and much more than before the war. There is, of course, a specialised audience among educated people, as in London, for foreign-language films.

These are catered for by specialised cinemas, such as the Hamburg "Waterloo," which often accompanies its presentations by special exhibitions in the foyer. French films are shown in large numbers, including all the best-quality pictures, plus less well-known productions like *Martin Roumagnac* and *Monte Cristo*.

The mass-audience, however, is mainly interested in American and English pictures. These are usually synchronised; before the war this method was usual in Germany, as in most Continental countries, and is preferred to subtitling. American films and stars are favoured for their mass-appeal, as everywhere.

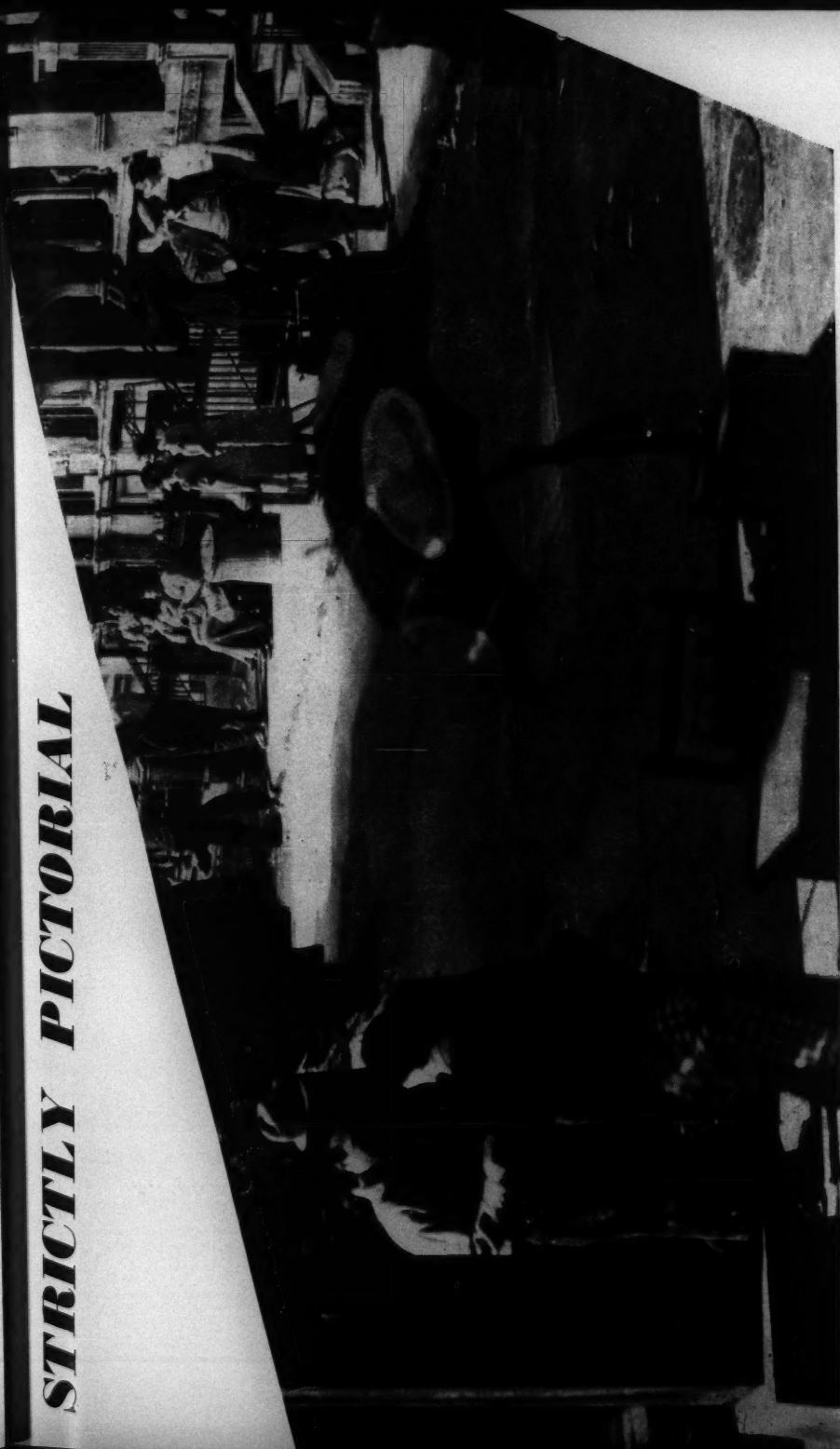
"Brief Encounter"—Flop

Here again, lowered standards of taste are in evidence, though there are signs that the extremes of bad taste and vulgarity would provoke protest where none would be heard in Britain. No American film of outstanding artistic quality, like the Orson Welles productions, or the full-length Walt Disneys, is ever shown.

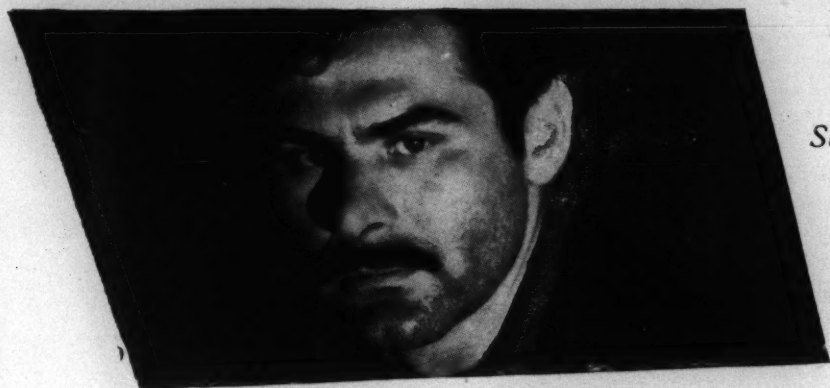
The position with British films is somewhat complicated. At first, there were signs that a careful selection of the best war-time and post-war British films was being made by the appropriate Military Government author-

(Continued on page 27)

STRICTLY PICTORIAL



Denham Studios' construction staff worked ten days and eleven nights erecting the 50ft.-high Brooklyn tenement building for Edward Dmytryk's GIVE US THIS DAY.



Sam Wanamaker
(*Geremio*)



Lea Padovani
(*Annunziata*)

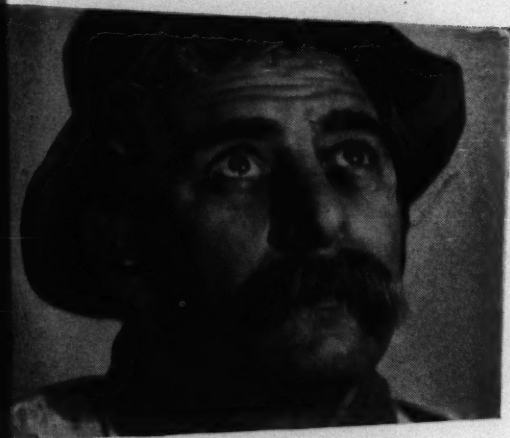


Bonar Colleano
(*Julio*)

Kathleen Ryan
(Kathleen)



Charles Goldner
(Luigi)



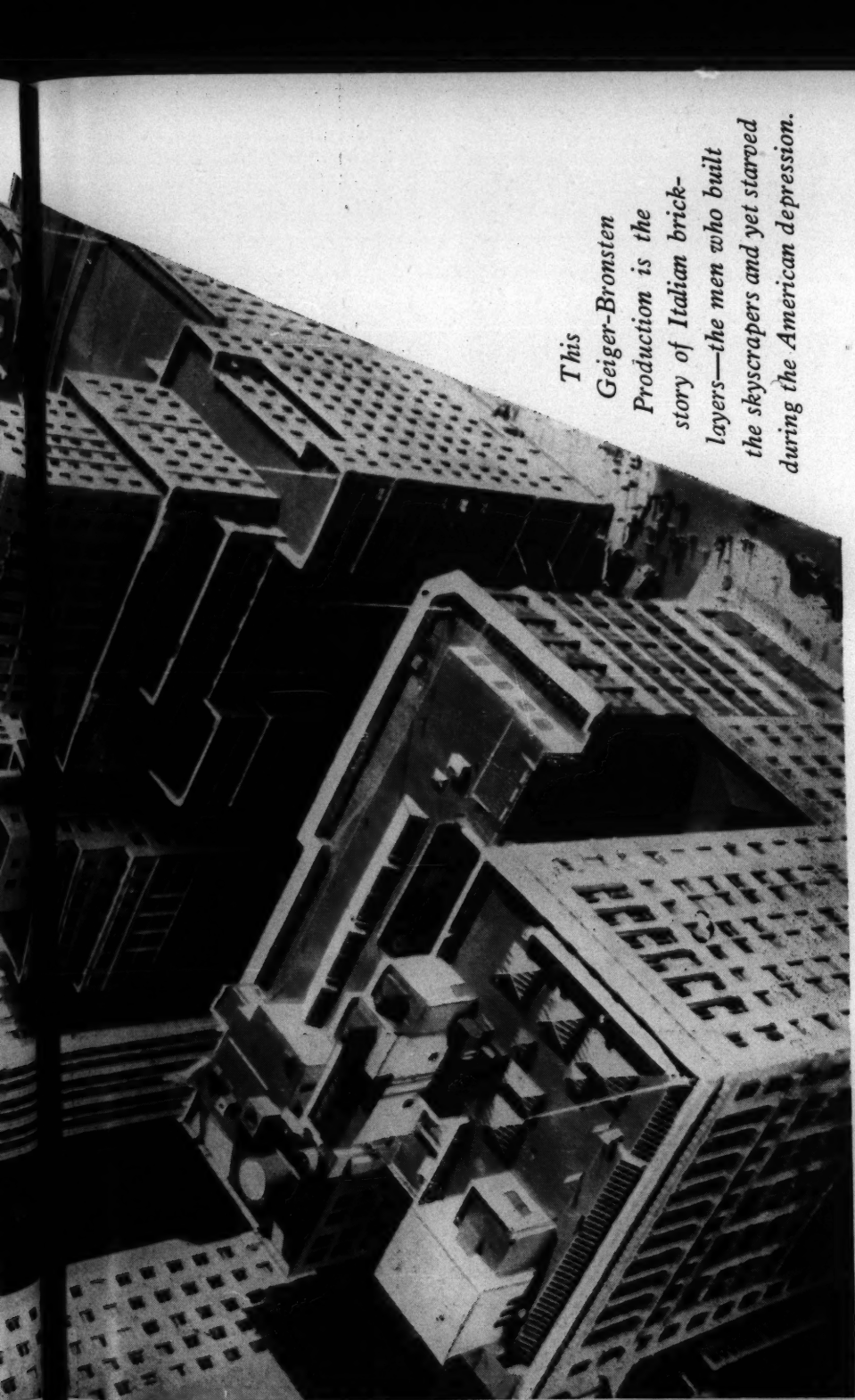
*Co-producer Rod Geiger—the
American who also gave us
OPEN CITY and PAISA.*



GIVE US THIS DAY

Director
Edward Dmytryk





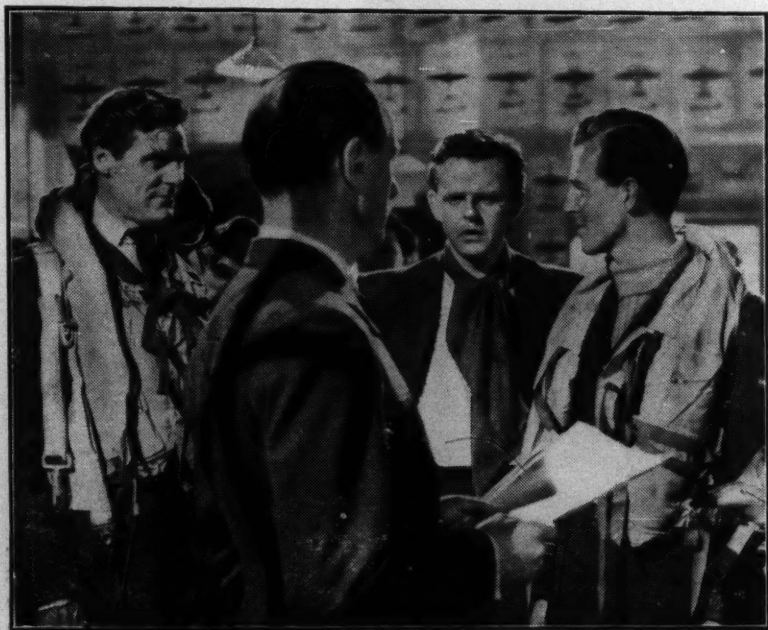
*This
Geiger-Bronsten
Production is the
story of Italian brick-
layers—the men who built
the skyscrapers and yet starved
during the American depression.*



*THE HASTY HEART (Associated British).
Ronald Reagan, Richard Todd and Patricia
Neal.*



Michael Denison and David Tomlinson in the Associated British LANDFALL—a story of Coastal Command.



"This is it, chaps!" Briefing instructions for David Tomlinson, Michael Denison and the rest of the crew.



*Shelley Winters stars in Universal International's
TAKE ONE FALSE STEP.*



ABBOTT AND COSTELLO
MEET THE GHOSTS

ities. Films like *Henry V*, *The Lamp Still Burns* and *Dead of Night* were shown at an early stage to fairly appreciative audiences.

The usual prejudices and sensitivities sometimes led to unexpected results: thus the sequence with the bombing of French refugees by the Luftwaffe in 1940, in *The Foreman Went to France*, was greeted with laughter as it was considered to be impossible.

More unaccountably *Brief Encounter*, which is as true of German as of English middle-class life, was a complete flop with both audiences and critics. Possibly a poorly-synchronised version, and the absence of either a "happy ending" or the usual alternative, death or suicide, were to blame.

Contempt for Ballyhoo

Ordinary commercial salesmanship has now replaced the Control Commission in this sphere, and the Rank empire has been extended to Germany.

Shrieking slogans on the tram-cars, and a huge neon sign blazing in the Hamburg night sky, proclaim that "In Hamburg as everywhere, J. Arthur Rank presents the films you want to see."

The film-goer is a little more sceptical. The better educated scoff; a recent cabaret show had a turn depicting a cinema bearing the sign "Out of bounds to all Ranks."

The flood of sex and sadism in recent productions designed to rival Hollywood has provoked special distaste, and has done England's reputation no good.

The satirical paper, "Der Simpel," recommended a correspondent to "offer your 'Bluebeard' script to an English film-company; they seem always on the

look-out for new murder, whipping and sadism stories, probably for artistic reasons — because blood looks so pretty in Technicolor."

The masses like such popular stars as Margaret Lockwood and James Mason, but in general prefer their "Kitsch" in its native Hollywood setting, rather than in pale copies from Denham or Pinewood.

The level of criticism is very high. Wooded by the best films of U.S.A., England, Russia, France and other countries, the critics insist on the highest standards. The outstanding British films are at once recognised for their true worth.

Odd Man Out was hailed as "The best for a long time, erasing the memory of dozens of doubtful British films"; "magical, almost uncanny expressiveness."

On the other hand, that wildly over-rated dollar-earner, *Hamlet*, was, after a few half-hearted tributes to its pretensions, faithfully dealt with: "The camera tears up and down and round about, giving one the same sensations as a ghost-train at a fun fair"; "One's most heartfelt wish was to see the same actors in the same play—on the stage."

Dozens of film-magazines crowd the news-stands, and, together with the generous columns devoted to cinema in the dailies, discuss the international film industry in all its bearings.

The latest trends and personalities are duly noted, and the public kept informed to an extent unknown in Britain. There are signs that the British and American producer will slowly have to accustom himself to contend with a more alert and well-informed audience, if he is to sell his wares in Germany.



by **Brian Robins**

"Film Monthly Review" Studio Reporter

DESPITE the continued efforts of the National Film Finance Corporation to step up the output of films from British studios—it granted twenty new loans to producers last month—more production plants in this country are today putting out the lights.

Fall of Rank Empire

Only ten of the thirty-odd British studios are in working order now; three have shut down since this year's production peak in June.

Worst hit in this current economy and reduction campaign is the mammoth Rank Organisation, which has discharged nearly 2,000 technicians of all grades from its Denham and Pinewood studios within the last twelve months.

With only one new film in preparation for shooting in December at Pinewood, the Rank production executives were forced to sell the former Gainsborough studios at Shepherds Bush.

The famous Gainsborough Lady trade mark is to be retained, however, by company chief Sydney Box who is in charge of Gainsborough's new films from a Pinewood headquarters.

There is strong talk around the studios that Box is to leave the Rank Organisation and Gainsborough soon, to launch out as an independent producer.

Economy Everywhere

The Islington studio, when it was under the direction of Betty Box, was the birthplace of the Huggett series of films, abandoned recently when the Rank group cut their annual film output by more than 50 per cent.

Another Rank production centre which has been out of action for nearly a year now is the small Highbury studio, where the well-known Rank charm school for starlets began, and where up-and-coming young technicians and actors were to be groomed for the front rank of filmdom.

Even the two other major producing groups in Britain at the present time—Associated British Picture Corporation and the Alexander Korda organisation—are bringing down film-making costs by shooting smaller-scale pictures in shorter shooting schedules, and, in many cases, saving studio administration expenses by making the films out-of-doors as much as possible.

More Government Aid

Chief factor behind the increasing slump in production is the lack of finance forthcoming from the City and business investors, who find in British films, at present, little financial profit. And what there is of that only goes to the backers when the film is shown on full release a year or more after the money is invested.

The Government Finance Corporation is expected to press the House of Commons for an increase in its £5,000,000 reserve when its current financial year is ended next April. Meanwhile the bulk of new films is coming from independent producers who either have private capital, or who can get State financial aid and rent Rank Organisation studios at recently slashed rates.

Films Being Made

At the big Associated British studios at Elstree, stars Richard Todd and Margaret Johnston are making *Portrait of Clare*, after location shooting up and down the country.

The company hope to find a new story to build up their contract star, Todd, who broke into the entertainment headlines following the premiere of his first picture for A.B.P.C., *The Hasty Heart*, at London's Warner Theatre.

In the same studio Patrick Holt and Elizabeth Sellars are

starring in *The Intruder*, the latest item in the psychological-thriller cycle. The picture is directed by Roy Kellino, a former cameraman. Kellino's former wife is Pamela Kellino, novelist and screenwriter, now wife of star James Mason.

Much of this picture was made among the moors and countryside of Devon during the summer holidays.

Novelist and playwright J. B. Priestley is in charge of production at the Associated British Welwyn studio, where his story, *Last Holiday*, stars Alec Guinness and Kay Walsh.

Soon to go on the floor at Welwyn is Phyllis Calvert's latest film, *Happy Now I Go*, and during next spring, a new Eric Portman subject, *Poison Road*, when it comes back from extensive locations in Egypt.

Dockland Film

Associated British screenwriter J. Lee Thompson has written a play and a film about the physician who invented chloroform—titled *The Human Touch*, it will be shot within the next few weeks at Elstree. No stars have been named yet.

Walt Disney's technicians are putting the finishing touch to his all-"live" colour version of the R. L. Stevenson story, *Treasure Island*, at Denham. When the picture is complete, star Robert Newton will leave for Liverpool to start work on location for *Waterfront*.

He will play opposite Kathleen Harrison in this story about life and work in dockland. Paul Soskin will produce the film, which may later be finished at Riverside Studios, Hammersmith.

Also in production on Denham's seven stages is the new Jean Kent picture, *The Reluctant Widow*,

a lively frolic set in the prosperous English Regency days.

John Mills and Richard Attenborough head the cast list on another independent film, titled *Morning Departure*. This is the story of the reactions of a team of Navy men on submarine duty.

About a third of the footage was "canned" at sea in co-operation with real naval units from Weymouth and Portland.

Eileen Joyce Picture

Ealing is shooting *Dance Hall* with Geraldo and Ted Heath's dance bands starring, and will make a new picture in Australia based on the life of eminent concert pianist Eileen Joyce.

The Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer plant at Boreham Wood, Elstree, has re-opened after many months' inactivity with a sequel to *Mrs. Miniver*, starring the original pair, Greer Garson and Walter Pidgeon.

The American company may follow this with *Young Bess*, a story by novelist Margaret Irwin about the early years of the English Tudor Queen Elizabeth. M.G.M. has a director-producer, Sidney Franklin, over here to shoot the two films.

Jean Simmons has returned to the studios with *So Long at the Fair*, a tale set in the days of the Paris Exhibition in the late 19th century. Her co-star is Dirk Bogarde.

After this film, Jean may make a picture about a beauty queen for screenwriter-director-producer Frank Launder of Individual Pictures.

Shoe-string Launder

The Launder-Sidney Gilliat team is broken up for the time being. Gilliat is making a thriller of his own invention, titled *Stage Secret* (Douglas Fairbanks, Glynis Johns), at Isleworth, while

Launder has just finished a screen version of the play, *The Happiest Days of Your Life* (Alastair Sim, Margaret Rutherford), at Riverside.

He set himself a short nine-week studio schedule, and a shoe-string budget under £100,000.

Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger plan to follow their current subject, *Gone to Earth* (Jennifer Jones, David Farrar), with a huge-scale Technicolor screen opera of *The Tales of Hoffman*. Sir Thomas Beecham is working on the music for the picture now.

Roy and John Boulting intend to make a new film with an Anglo-American flavour after their all-location effort about a modern Guy Fawkes, titled *Seven Days to Noon*, now at Shepperton; over half of this picture was shot in the streets of London.

Robert Beatty and Rona Anderson—now a free-lance star after her release from a Rank contract—will appear in a film version of the Twenty Questions radio show, in production at Southall. Most of the B.B.C. quiz experts also will star in this picture.

EASY MONEY .

Ben Hecht is reported to receive 1,000 dollars a day from producers for making suggestions on other writers' scripts which he reads overnight.

—Pat Gottlieb, "F.M.R."

Hollywood correspondent.



Gina Lollobrigida and Yvonne Sansom as they appear in Luigi Zampa's
"Children of Chance," the film about Italian prostitutes. (Lux Films.)

THE THIRD MANnerisms

or

Whither the Zither?

THERE'S a wonderful film at the Regal;
You must go and see it this week.
There isn't a plot, and the stars aren't so hot,
But it's simply infused with *technique*.

* * *

To begin with, the film is projected
On a seven-dimensional screen.
The sound-track's reversed; the dialogue versed,
In triolets written by Greene.

* * *

The action takes place in a cesspool,
In an Austrian glue-mining town.
They run a black-market in corn-pads;
The third reel is shown upside down.

* * *

But remark on the background musicians;
They're awfully clever and cute;
For, you see, they don't play in the usual way,
But on glockenspiel, sackbut and flute.

* * *

I wish I could tell you who's in it;
Just to make my description complete.
I'll be honest with you—I haven't a clue!
The film only features their feet.

MICHAEL HENNESSEY

*(Poetic licence applied for. Readers pointing out
factual errors will be disdainfully ignored.—Ed.)*

ABOUT DIALOGUE

By PAUL NUGAT

If the film story has no guts, then it doesn't matter how many screenwriters are employed to write the dialogue. The finished picture will still be a "flop."

TWENTY-ONE years ago, dialogue crept on to the soundtrack. It was accidental, frightening, important, full of possibilities.

Al Jolson was making the *Jazz Singer*, when, in a casual aside, he said: "Come on, Ma . . . listen to this." This scrap of dialogue was not in the script and not in his contract, which stipulated he was being paid to sing.

Yet in doing so, he not only created history, but, inadvertently, the pattern of craftsmanship that has rarely been discarded by two decades of screenwriters.

Out of that little sentence, a whole principle was evolved for the future guidance of the aspiring writer. In effect it amounted to this: If you can't say it in one sentence, it had better not be said at all.

The sentence besides being a one-liner (for preference) should be crisp, inoffensive to banker or butcher, understandable to both, provide continuity without interfering with the action, sustain or build up the suspense, evoke laughter or tears, cut down the production costs, conform to the status of the character mouthing it without straining his or her memory.

Writers were immediately forthcoming, ready to comply with the diktat. As the English language stood, it became evident

to the most conscientious of them that the paramount need was the introduction of certain language reforms.

Violent changes were not necessary. The impact of the foreigner on any language, as any aspirant linguist knows, is the unintentional alteration of the structure of that language.

Frustrated by inarticulation and an inaccurate appreciation of the correct pronunciation of words, we tend to compress the language in order to convey the sense of what we want to say.

And so the American just had to listen and absorb and realise that natural dialogue is ungrammatical and the more comprehensible for being so, in a land where its people are in a constant hurry to lose their European backgrounds and gain a new identity.

Consequently, the American language sees a far larger accretion of words and phrases than do other languages; and because of their constant employment the phrases become clichés within a year.

To the screenwriter, continually reminded that his words and phrases must be intelligible to the masses, and often confronted with a time-limit in which to prepare his script, the "Book of Ruth" seems a less desirable model of simplicity than some cliché or purloined sentence.

British screenwriters suffer to a lesser degree from the above symptoms. But they have other problems, which help to make their dialogue no less inane.

Safety in Numbers

Let us pause and see where British producers have aped former Hollywood habits. Firstly, they prefer novels, plays, and successful work to originals, although they are forever professing their faith in original screenplays, if they could only find them (yet Hollywood has no difficulty in doing so nowadays).

Being business people, first, last and all the time, it is quite impossible for them to understand that if they employed every screenwriter in the country, they cannot hope to transform the material into a better film than it was a play, a book, etc.

NEXT MONTH



"The Script from the Actor's Standpoint"

by

DAVID FARRAR

Sometimes, it is true, one begins to suspect that the truth is about to dawn upon them, but the reaction is always the same. They try to take out an insurance policy on Success by employing as many writers, screenwriters, and re-writers, as the budget can cope with.

It is equally impossible to tell a high-level executive that no two screenwriters can conceive a real or fictional character in his mind's eye in the same proportions.

From which it follows (if one believes that dialogue flows from a clear-cut perception of character) that no two or three or four screenwriters could ever compose the same lines for the same characters.

Much Ado About . . .

But does it also follow that if film executives were to concede this point, and only employ one screenwriter on a film, that we should notice a radical change in screen dialogue? Would words begin to identify themselves with writers' styles, to add up to something occasionally lyrical and even memorable?

I believe it is impossible to answer this question now. Much play is often made of the abuses to which screenwriters are subjected, but so little attention is devoted to the fact that the discussions take place in an atmosphere of thematic vacuums.

Until we cease being scared of subject matter that is charged with dynamite, partisan in spirit, provocative and stimulating to the assenting and the dissenting, what does it matter to the future of the cinema whether one screenwriter or three screenwriters go on wracking their brains about nothing?

SATIRE

WRITING FOR THE FILMS

by

Michael Hennessey

Lesson I

WHEN the Editor finally agreed to let me impart some useful tips on screenwriting, I put away my revolver and told him I'd be glad to oblige.

Although I've never actually written a film script, I do know someone who has; and so I can speak with some authority on this subject.

I dedicate this article to all those young authors who, though bursting with talent, have not yet found favour with producers.

Now a great deal can be learned from foreign films; one of the first things the alert screenwriter will notice is that you can't have a tragedy without an iron bedstead; secondly, there is no connection whatever between the dialogue and the sub-titles. That's progress, I think.

Costumes present little difficulty in foreign films; old potato sacks, American-army boots, newspapers—all are used.

For a moving picture, it's evident that the essentials are Poverty, Lust, Degradation, Starvation, Disease and that hardy perennial, Frustration. But, above all, Poverty—this proves the argument that the less you have,

the happier you are. (Ask the stars about salary cuts.)

So let's have a good healthy plague, an earthquake or two, and plenty of mud and squalor—success is then assured.

Here is a short passage from a recent Italian film:

The hero is a consumptive fiddler (musical, not monetary) living in a small shack and poverty. The action takes place on a collective farm almost in the River Po; the countryside is flooded.

I have translated to the best of my ability, but the script has been used for rather obscure purposes and is somewhat blurred in parts.

IGNOBLIO: Oh, Maria, soon the floods will come and wash away our settlement.

MARIA: Then I shall float to freedom on the chest of drawers.

IGNOBLIO: (*Fervently*) May I accompany you on the pianola?

MARIA: (*Bursting into tears*) OH! Ignoblio, what are we to do? We have nothing to drink but water,

and nothing to eat except food!

IGNOBLIO: There, there my little dove, fly with me to Rome.

MARIA: (*Wiping her eyes on her hair*) But I do not love you! I love only Antonio.

IGNOBLIO: Do you want me to go down on my bended nose?

(The script was practically indecipherable here so I can't vouch for the accuracy.)

Just think, we'll have a little pile of bomb damage all to ourselves. We will sit by the cosy warmth of my cigarette lighter and through the gaping hole in the roof will come the smell of night-scented sock.

And in the daytime, I shall go to work, and you shall do your little jobs about the house — like bricklaying, plastering and perhaps a teeny bit of demolition? Then later perhaps we shall hear the patter of tiny clogs. Wooden shoe like that?

MARIA: Oh, but my Antonio has promised me a sublet air raid shelter in Genoa. (*She stabs him in the throat and sets fire to his fiddle.*)

FADE OUT.

THE END.

That's just a brief example, but you can see the pathos (or is it pathology?)—the whole dialogue reeks of poverty, or something. Even the script is poor.

HOLLYWOOD

Original Stories

Of films in production or in preparation, 70 per cent. are from stories specially written for the screen.

Reason: Original stories and screenplays are cheaper to buy.

Hollywood studios are economising further by shooting many films out-of-doors. Half the pictures being made by Universal International are location films.

SOVIET RUSSIA

Screenwriters' Status

"No theatre or film studio has the right to cut or to add a single line without the consent of the author.

"The author has the right to attend at every rehearsal of his play and to see whatever shots have been made of his scenario.

"If, during the making of a film, an author feels that his work is being distorted, he has the right to ask that the director or any actor be changed, and the studio is obliged to pay attention to his complaints."—**GEORGI MDIVANI**, in "*Soviet Writers Reply*" (Edited by *Edgell Rickword*, Foreword by *J. B. Priestley*. Published by the *Writers' Group, Society for Cultural Relations with the U.S.S.R.*, 2s.).

AMERICAN CINEMAS EXPERIMENT WITH TV

by
Jacqueline Mallet

AN attempt to place large-screen television in the cinema on a commercial basis was made in America a few weeks ago.

Twenty-four cinemas, in five cities, installed the necessary elaborate equipment and paid 10,000 dollars each for the privilege of relaying the widely publicised World Series baseball games.

Large headlines and lavish poster displays heralded the innovation; and prices of admission were raised in anticipation of a rush on the box office. But although the transmissions were a great success technically, the public showed no great desire to be present.

Instead, they flocked into saloon bars, drug stores and clubs, where they could see the baseball for nothing. Or they saw it in their own homes; and there are many more television sets in America than there are here.

The cinemas feel that they did not get a square deal. In future, they say, there must be no competition from any outside source.

This certainly shows which way the wind is likely to blow, and what might happen if cinemas over here were given permission to relay programmes from their own television transmitters.

They would, assuredly, outbid the B.B.C. for many of the leading attractions of the day; perhaps this is why the Television Advisory Committee is so ultra-

cautious in its dealings with the cinema interests.

And the cinema magnates are even more cautious when hiring the most ancient of films to the B.B.C., though there are one or two companies, notably Ealing Studios, who have braved the exhibitors' wrath and disposed of films which have had their day in the cinemas.

Most of the cinema owners are very anti-television. But lately, one or two have been putting on an air of bravado and challenging television to do its worst. Mr. Jack Xavier Prendegast, for instance, one of the most outspoken of the rather conservative men behind the box-office.

"Why be scared of television?" trumpets Mr. P. "Television is far more scared of us, and that scare will paralyse them if we have the courage to tell them: 'Get on with your own job. Create your own material. Leave our raw material alone . . . Don't try to muscle in on our business or, worse still, to try scare-cajolery into aiding you.'"

Brave words, Mr. P., but hardly calculated to bring permission to install large-screen television in your cinemas, as the Rank circuit, Granada Theatres and others are quite anxious to do.

Meanwhile, the B.B.C. is taking a lively interest in a series of shorts being made for American television at the recently opened

Oldway Film Studios at Paignton. Financed, produced and scripted by Americans, the series at least finds work for British actors and technicians.

The first film, which has now been delivered to New York, is called "Shadows of the Mind," and will be followed by other episodes from a surgeon's case book. It is hoped to turn out three of these shorts every month; they will be telecast from 420 stations in the U.S.A. They will also be available to the B.B.C., if required.

Film Music

All the other small studios making films for American 'vision are so busy that it begins to look as if they will soon be employing as many men as the film industry proper!

Full-length plays are now going into production; and one company has received further backing from the Film Finance Corporation.

American viewers would appear to be in considerable danger of understanding the "Limey" dialect in the very near future!

Record Review

By JOHN HUNTLEY

THE record catalogues have recently been dominated by an item that visitors to *That Dangerous Age* will know by now—"Song of Capri." There is a number of recordings to choose from, but my own personal selection is the Decca version; sung by Lee Lawrence accompanied by Stanley Black and his Orchestra (Decca F9198).

This music is, of course, in the popular vein, but Mischa Spoliansky, the composer, is an expert craftsman and has had a great deal of experience in the film world.

Everyone must know the fine songs he wrote for the pre-war Paul Robeson films—the Canoe Song and the Congo Lullaby from *Sanders of the River*, the Mountain Song and the Wagon Song from *King Solomon's Mines*.

His dramatic background theme from the film *Wanted for Murder* was popular at one time when it appeared under the title of "A

Voice in the Night." "Song of Capri" is heard extensively in the film, both as a song and as a leitmotif for the background score.

Still in the popular field, "My One and Only Highland Fling," from the *Barkleys of Broadway*, is a novelty in the Hollywood musical tradition, sung by Jo Stafford and Gordon MacRae, with Paul Weston and his Orchestra.

"This is the Moment" (from *That Lady in Ermine*) on the reverse side offers no novelty whatsoever; it is pure slush in the worst style. (Capitol CL 13145).

Decca have issued a pleasing arrangement of music from *Out of this World*. The performance by Mantovani and his Orchestra is good; listen especially to some excellent woodwind orchestration and playing which provides an eerie, flowing quality to the music.

The opening bars are almost

identical to the introduction in Addinsell's *Blithe Spirit* music—the same ghostly-gay treatment, using oboes, vibraphone and harp glissandos. (Decca F9215).

What a characteristic voice Marlene Dietrich has! It possesses a fascination all of its own, but I find it is best taken in small doses, because every song she sings sounds exactly the same.

If you have been a fan of hers since *The Blue Angel* and would like a souvenir of *A Foreign Affair*, she has recorded two songs, "Illusions" and "Black Market," both by the film's music director, Frederick Hollander, and both with an orchestral accompaniment conducted by Gordon Jenkins.

All the husky allure is suitably captured on the disc.

Finally, this month we have an example of "pure" film music. Although not an original score as such, Philip Green's arrangement of some traditional melodies into the form of a "Gaelic Fantasia," for the film *Saints and Sinners*, is attractive and effective in the picture.

Philip Green's own orchestra have made a very good recording on M.G.M. 221; it is melodic, technically competent and well worth getting.

For Your Collection:

Prelude and Waltz from *Blithe Spirit*. (Columbia DX1186).

Hearing the record of *Out of this World* recently drew my attention to this excellent disc made by the London Symphony

Orchestra, conducted by Muir Mathieson.

The score is by Richard Addinsell and the film was made in 1945. The ghostly main theme is featured in the waltz, while a musical sketch of Madame Arcati (Margaret Rutherford), the eccentric medium of the story—riding her bicycle through the village on her way to a seance at the house of the Condomines—is a good example of comedy under-scoring at its best.

Booklets

"DOCUMENTARY 49 FILM FESTIVAL"

Contains: "Reporting Progress" (John Grierson); "British Documentary" (Roger Manvell); "Documentary in France" (Jean Painlevé); "German Documentary" (Paul Rotha); "Danish Documentary" (Forsyth Hardy); "In Czechoslovakia" (Jaroslav Broz); "Film Making in Yugoslavia" (Maud Miller); also accounts of the documentary in many other countries. Reviews. Illustrated.

(Albyn Press, 1s.).

"FILMS IN FOCUS"

Richard Auty, a graduate of the London School of Economics, very clearly analyses the film crisis.

(Price 9d. From the Bureau of Current Affairs, 117, Piccadilly, London, W.1.)

("F.M.R." Book Guide will be resumed next month.)

NO ORCHIDS

A certain critic, noted for his stricture,
Once murmured, as the audience started thinning,

"I didn't like the ending of that picture.

"I thought it much too far from the beginning."—M.H.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Training Centre

"Is it a British film?" was the familiar question asked during and after the war. People had become receptive to the naturalness of British films, and they were, I think, proud of them.

Then, about three years ago, the industry found itself in a complacent mood. "We have no superiors!" This, and many other such statements were made during the period when our films had (so it was thought) begun a new era.

Today, except for the productions of one or two companies, notably Ealing Studios, our films have become overlong, dreary, full of dialogue, and without any artistic or social significance.

Money had again brought back the star system—a system, which is, at the moment, the major force of attraction to the public; the public is reverting to the habit of going to the cinema and taking whatever is dished up to them.

But I believe that the public do want films that are more than mere entertainment; the trouble is, they fight shy when words like "art" and "social issues" are mentioned.

We need young producers, screenwriters, directors and technicians who are willing to take risks and to experiment, so that the film will be recognised as an art comparable to music and the theatre.

Today, the theatre, music, opera and the ballet are becoming more and more popular. Once the cinema has ceased to be regarded as "low" by influential

people—this reputation has grown up with it—it, too, will get the "break" it deserves.

In the past, we scoffed at American films. But, recently, whatever their faults, the Americans have produced films with vital social issues. And they have far more to fear than have British film makers; there is a Legion of Decency plus numerous influential women's clubs in the U.S.A. It's worth while noting that these particular films were entertaining and artistically good, too.

One young American producer, Doré Schary—who made his name with such films as *Crossfire*, *They Live by Night* and *The Window*—has been given a contract with M.G.M. He is now responsible only to Louis B. Mayer.

What is needed in Britain—and needed now—is a Centre such as was established in Italy in 1935. The Centre trains directors, technicians, artists, dress designers, actors and actresses.

Many of the now famous names of the Italian cinema were trained at this Centre. (I think that the training of producers and screenwriters should be added in the case of a British Centre.)

Of course, it will cost money at the outset; but surely the survival of British films will justify this!

As Sir Stafford Cripps has said:

"People often talk about the film as an industry as if it were a question of machines and workers like any other industry. I prefer

also to look upon it as one of the most important expressions of British culture."—J. E. ATKIN, 23, Grantham Road, Sleaford, Lincs.

(Mr. Atkin would like to get in touch with all "F.M.R." readers in the Sleaford-Lincs area.)

Rudolph Valentino

I require certain information to complete a biography of Rudolph Valentino, to be published shortly, and wonder whether any "Film Monthly Review" readers could kindly furnish it.

The data needed is as follows:
Full screen stories of *The*

Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (also musical scores and prologues); *Uncharted Seas* (also cast and release date); *Camille* (also cast); *The Conquering Power* (also cast); *Moran of the Lady Letty* (also cast); and full credits of *Blood and Sand*, *The Young Rajah* and *The Sainted Devil*, together with release dates.

Any other details or supplementary information will be gratefully received, and matter which readers wish returned will be carefully looked after and sent back as soon as possible.—

NORMAN A. MACKENZIE,
3, North Castle Wynd, Edinburgh 1, Scotland.

FILM REVIEWS

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT (Academy)

This Swedish version is the most exciting treatment yet made of the Dostoevsky novel.

Hampe Faustman, who directed the film and plays Ras-kolnikov, has imbued the picture with an intensity of feeling. And Sigurd Wallen is uncomfortably convincing as the relentless investigator, Zametov.

Perhaps the only flaw in this fine piece of screencraft is the casting of Gunn Wallgren as Sonia; a young girl who is willing to walk the streets in order to prevent her family from starving would, I feel sure, possess a certain strength in her features.

The screenwriters, Bertil Malmberg and Sven Stolpe, obviously understand the film medium; here are two "adapters" who can be proud of their work.

L'AIGLE A DEUX TETES (Studio One)

Jean Cocteau should never have turned his play, "The Eagle Has Two Heads," into a film. I would go further and say that poets like Cocteau should never be allowed to make films at all; theirs is the tradition of literature and the theatre. They can contribute nothing but obscurity and fantasy to an art form that needs to be fed with vigorous reality.

There is visual beauty in the acting of Edwige Feuillère (the Queen) and in some of the camerawork. But I repeat—*L'Aigle A Deux Têtes* is not a film.

LES AMANTS DE VERONE (Cameo-Polytechnic)

Another example of the decline of the French cinema. Says my synopsis: "The real-life story of this couple (Angelo and Georgia,

two stand-ins employed during the filming of *Romeo and Juliet*) is going to follow Shakespeare's drama with an amazing likeness."

That may be so; but Shakespeare's drama was written for the stage.

"The fiction of the stage and the drama of their lives," continues the synopsis, "touch one another with cruel coincidence." Frankly, I would call the whole film a badly contrived coincidence, so far as the story is concerned.

However, despite its pretentiousness and despite several completely irrelevant scenes in which Marcel Dalio takes the part of a very boring lunatic, the film does have its moments of beauty—when that delightful young actress, Anouk, happens to be around.

André Cayatte and Jacques Prévert wrote the untidy and stagy screenplay. I suggest they now adapt it for the theatre; the task should not prove difficult.

R.H.

CHILDREN OF CHANCE

This is a picture of a British film unit that went to an island in the Bay of Naples and made a futile attempt to "cash in" on the current craze for films with an Italian setting.

They were certainly handicapped by having to utter some of the most trite dialogue it has been my misfortune to endure for many a long year; yet the story is based upon an unusual and refreshing idea, which will, no doubt, appear perfectly credible and highly diverting in the Italian version.

If you can accept the opening premise that a girl as beautiful as Patricia Medina could make 1½ million lire in the black market and still remain pure and unspotted, then you will no doubt be intrigued to learn what happens when her banker (a local priest) invests the money in a children's orphanage.

Indeed, the best acting in the film comes from the children, who are dragged into the picture every time the action shows signs of flagging. They enjoy a considerable advantage over their elders in being called upon to speak few or no lines at all.

Of the three leading actors, only Yvonne Mitchell left me with the feeling that she would be worth seeing in a more acceptable part; Patricia Medina and Manning Whiley never struck a spark of life from their lengthy roles.

Among the supporting characters Barbara Everest gave the sound performance we have come to expect from her; and Elliot Makeham supplied his usual distinctive cameo.

Director Luigi Zampa must at least share credit with his cameraman for some effective photography, but somebody should have told him that his assistant, Denis Johnson, is a very accomplished playwright, who could doubtless have eliminated some of the more embarrassing lines in this film.

Children of Chance is certainly no exception to the rule that it is impossible to make successful two-language versions of the same story side by side.

AUSTIN WELLAND.

"GRAND PRIX" FILMED

AN interesting and enterprising project of the Shell Film Unit is their new "Grand Prix" film. This unit has a reputation for better-than-most films of technical and instructional value, and its latest venture is well up to the standard expected.

An attendance of over 100,000 people at Silverstone, scene of the 1949 British Grand Prix, certainly suggests interest.

The cameras follow the race throughout, commencing with the scenes of preparation. The massed start itself is magnificently photographed, and the tenseness of the race is somehow caught and conveyed to the cinema audience. A notable feature is the intimacy of the camera which invades the pits (replenishment depots); this shows us how important is the speed and efficiency exercised in getting a car back on the road again.

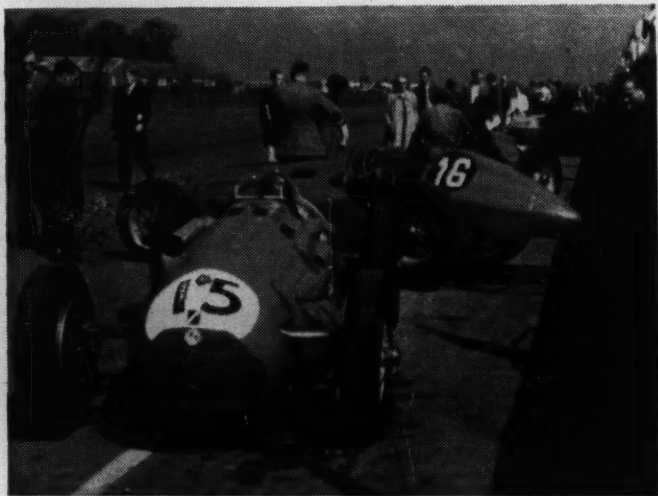
A popular motor-competition journalist, R. L. de B. Walkerley, was chosen to give the commentary. This is extremely well imparted and entirely without the "penny dreadful" dramatic touch.

It is on record that drivers who actually competed in this race were astonished, on seeing the film, to find so much excitement rife in the actual event.

Full credit for a fine piece of production to Mr. Bill Mason and Mr. Peter de Normanville.

The film will be available to film societies and other interested organisations, without charge, in 16mm. and 35mm. sizes through local Shell offices, or from Trade Relations Department, Shell-Mex and B.P., Ltd., Shell-Mex House, Strand, London, W.C.2. It will receive world-wide distribution.

PAT MILNE.



Before the start, two French Lago Talbots.

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